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ABSTRACT

The experiences of five California school districts in implementing English immersion instruction for all limited-English-speaking students are described and compared. The districts range from populous urban settings to small, isolated rural communities. The first part of the report profiles the five districts, and the second part sets forth three significant issues that made planning for English immersion difficult: defining the terminology used in designing, implementing, and describing the programs; specifying the characteristics and elements of immersion instruction so they could be applied consistently; and designing the program itself, including population, placement, proportion of instruction in English, and nature and quantity of contact with native English speakers. The third part outlines some program implementation issues that occurred in all of the districts, and how they were resolved. The article concludes with a description of the common evaluation design used in all of the districts and presents some preliminary student achievement data. (Contains 16 references.) (MSE)

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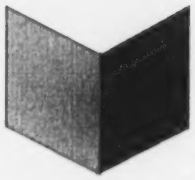

READ ABSTRACTS

Research and Policy Brief June 1999

From Primary Language Instruction to English Immersion:
How Five California Districts Made the Switch

By Kevin Clark

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Executive Summary

On its face, it seems simple enough: Teach immigrant students English through English. Put another way, stop teaching Limited-English Proficient (LEP) students through their primary language and use English. In its most absurd form, it was interpreted as 51 percent of the school day in English, 49 percent in Spanish. But no matter how the message was phrased, twisted, spindled or spun, it all boiled down to this: The day after California's voters passed the much-discussed Proposition 227, the loud, clear message was "teach English and do it quickly."

What followed after the passage of California's bellwether legislation requiring that immigrant school children be taught English in specially designed English immersion classrooms ranged from incredulity to celebration. During the months leading up to the vote, California was at the center of a national policy debate centered on how best to teach English to non-English speaking students. After 22 years of dubious results with state-imposed bilingual programs, educators, parents, and policymakers were asking why the state's 1.4 million LEP students were not learning English well or rapidly. A fractured and contentious debate had as its varied venues the local barbershop, the editorial page, and the school staff lounge. Everybody, it seemed, knew a little something about teaching English.

It is perhaps not surprising then that in the weeks and months after its passage those most immediately affected by the law's mandate—teachers, schools, districts, county offices, and the California Department of Education itself—quickly adopted one of four attitudes:

1. The law passed but will surely be overturned by the courts, the legislature, the "feds," the new governor, by someone or some agency—so we'll wait.

2. Yes, it passed, but we will act as if it did not pass and do things as we always have.

3. It passed, so let's get on with implementing a legally compliant program.

4. This is what we have always wanted, so let's get to work.

Headlines, radio shows, local demonstrations, and staff lounge chat could all be easily slotted into one of the four response patterns. From San Francisco Superintendent Bill Rojas' public proclamation that he would go to jail before implementing the new law (Asimov, 1998), to organized attempts by Los Angeles Unified School District teachers and others to defy the law's requirement for English instruction (Elias, 1998; Moore, 1998) to silent, less publicized celebrations of common sense prevailing over ideology, the responses covered the spectrum. But in those weeks following the proposition's passage, the actions of California schools and districts that moved rapidly to implement structured English immersion programs would tell an even more dramatic story.

This article recounts the events and experiences of five California school districts—from populous urban settings to small, isolated rural communities—that took a

previously little understood concept of immersion language teaching and turned it into a successful reality. In their respective journeys to implementation, each was forced to confront many of the same issues, challenges, snags, and criticism. But in the end they all agreed that the transformation from bilingual approaches to English immersion education required a complete—and sometimes difficult and emotional—re-thinking and re-conceptualization of how to educate today's Limited-English Proficient students.

The first part of this article describes the five districts profiled throughout. The second part sets forth three significant issues that made planning for English immersion difficult. The third part sets forth some program implementation issues that surfaced in all of the districts and how they were resolved. The article concludes with a description of the common evaluation design used in all of the districts and presents some preliminary student achievement data.

I. The Case Study Districts

1. Orange Unified School District: Located in Southern California not too far from Disneyland, the Orange Unified School District enrolls nearly 28,000 students in grades K-12. Of these, more than 7,000 are limited English proficient. In 1997 the district petitioned the state board of education for a "waiver" of the requirement to hire additional bilingual teachers and to continue providing primary language instruction (mainly Spanish) in its bilingual education program. After months of acrimonious wrangling with the California Department of Education and legal bills in excess of $300,000, the district was granted permission to implement its *Structured English Immersion Program* in the fall of 1997, nearly nine months before passage of Proposition 227. Almost 5,500 elementary LEP students are enrolled in this program.

2. Delano Union Elementary School District: Enrolling nearly 6,100 students—3,000 of whom are LEP—in grades kindergarten through eight—the district is situated in California's agricultural heartland, between Bakersfield and Fresno. Headquarters for the Unified Farm Workers Union, the district has a long history of educating immigrant children through bilingual education programs. Its high proportion of LEP students put the district on the California Department of Education's yearly compliance monitoring list. The district eliminated all bilingual programs after Proposition 227 and implemented its *Sheltered English Immersion Program* for nearly 1,700 LEP students, featuring more than 90 immersion classrooms in fall 1998.

3. Atwater Elementary School District: Located 80 miles east of San Francisco, the district enrolls 4,500 students, one-third of whom are LEP. This K-8 district has operated for the past four years under an Office for Civil Rights (OCR) monitoring arrangement that called for increased primary language instruction, including the hiring of an additional 30 bilingual teachers in spite of mixed results in student achievement for bilingual instruction. After the passage of Proposition 227, the district dismantled its bilingual program and started its English immersion program, known locally as *Accelerated Classes for English,* in August 1998.

4. Ceres Unified School District: This central California K-12 district of 9,500 students features a relatively low percentage of LEP students at just under 10 percent. In prior years it had concentrated its bilingual staff at two or three of the district's 13 sites, including the high school. Ceres, too, eliminated its bilingual program and replaced it with the *Accelerated Language Academy* in the fall of 1998.

5. Riverdale Unified School District: This 1,329-student rural district, located one hour by car west of Fresno has one of the highest county percentages of LEP students at 38 percent. The district has three sites: two elementary schools and a comprehensive high school. In August 1997, the district, acting on demands from its parents and teachers, petitioned the State Board of Education for a waiver to eliminate bilingual instruction and to implement a K-12 immersion program. Neither the State Board of Education nor the Department of Education ever responded to that request. Ten months later, Proposition 227 passed. The district began its *High Intensity English Immersion Academy* in fall 1998.

II. Getting English immersion Started: Three Significant Issues

As these districts planned for implementation of their English immersion programs, each was faced by several common issues. This section delineates those issues and relates some possible causes for each.

Issue #1: Defining Terms

> "*Sheltered English immersion was not on any of the tests I took to become a teacher in this state. How can it be considered a 'real' program if no one taught it to us?*"—Kindergarten teacher

> "*Our bilingual program is really more like an immersion program, so as far as I'm concerned we can keep doing our bilingual program.*"—Elementary school administrator

Few terms in public education are ever truly defined. In the field of language minority education it's a virtual minefield of semantic explosives. As Rossell (1998) has pointed out, there is little agreement over even basic terms. For example, what is a "bilingual" program? What is a "bilingual" teacher? What does "immersion" really mean? Is it the same as "submersion"? How about "sheltered" instruction? Do we even all agree on what "ESL" is—English as a Second Language—(or ELD—English Language Development—as it is known in California)? This lack of term specifics spirals out of control at a school or district level, especially when a program change is in the offing. Can a school or district have bilingual "classes" without having a bilingual "program," or vice versa? Can you have a "sheltered" program for students who do not possess an intermediate set of English language skills? Is being taught *in* English the same as being taught English?

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Bilingual Good – Immersion Bad

Whose definitions of terms were to be accepted? This question of semantics was indeed the first big issue facing districts that moved to implement English immersion. For California educators, many of the terms in the Proposition 227 law were virtually unknown or had negative connotations. Years of mandated teacher training following a prescribed, ideological syllabus had left teachers with the impression that "bilingual" education (in all its forms) was good, desirable, proven by research, better for kids, and endorsed by the only two linguists most had ever heard of—Steve Krashen and Jim Cummins [of the University of Southern California and the University of Toronto, respectively. Both are leading advocates of bilingual education.].

By contrast, most teacher training programs rarely referred to immersion, which was usually confused with "submersion" and therefore placed in the "bad" column as being anti-immigrant (does not affirm their home language), unrealistic in its expectations (rapid language learning) and denigrating to students' self esteem (through ostensible loss of the home language). This view was further supported by California Department of Education policy and staff who over the years had pressured districts through compliance reviews, threats of funding interruptions, and mandated bilingual teacher training (Clark, 1998).

School administrators believed they should at least say they were trying to build a bilingual program, even if they did not believe it best for their students or found local difficulties to its implementation. Dr. Neil McKinnon, assistant superintendent of the Orange Unified School District and point person of the district's efforts to drop bilingual and implement an English immersion program, tangled repeatedly with California Department of Education officials. "They [department and compliance officials] believe in bilingual education," says McKinnon. "They were vested in it and thought it was the only way to go. Underlying that was an arrogance that they could make people do it how they wanted it done."

A popular misconception in all the districts was that "immersion" and "submersion" are synonymous. In the Delano Union Elementary School District, the perceived interchangeability of the two terms was initially problematic and added to the difficulty district educators had in understanding the new "Sheltered English Immersion" program. Kevin Monsma, director of special projects for the district and a former bilingual teacher, remembers the semantic issues well. "There were some teachers who saw our proposed English immersion program as submersion," Monsma says. "You really had to define the difference between the two before people understood what we wanted to do." English immersion programs require a special curriculum, texts, and trained teachers to provide English language instruction and subject matter at the same time—it is a program designed for English language learners. "Submersion" implies doing nothing special at all for limited-English students beyond placing them in a regular classroom and expecting them to learn the new language randomly. There is no comparison.

The Law's Language

The actual language of the law seemed only to fan the flames of semantic confusion. It called for an instructional program "not normally intended to exceed one year" that would be taught "overwhelmingly" in English and that would feature special "English language classrooms." These terms inspired doubt and confusion among educators when interpreted through the lens of what had been presented as gospel for years by the Department of Education and various institutions of higher education. It's little wonder so many educators protested. After all, educators had been assured, repeatedly, of the rightness of these premises: that Limited- English Proficient students need long periods (three to seven years) of primary language instruction; that English language learning usually takes five, seven, or even 10 years; that English instruction should be limited until primary language skills are fully developed. Proposition 227 now asked them to believe that English could be *taught* (and not just *acquired*), that there was indeed a program to accomplish such a goal (immersion), that students could gain significant English skills in one year, and that students could learn core school subjects presented in English.

Dr. Sandra Lenker, superintendent of the Atwater Elementary School District in Central California, points out that discarding old beliefs about language-minority education was both "liberating" and a bit worrisome. "The studies that had been presented to us over and over said that kids taught in their primary language did better over time," says Lenker. "These were national studies, and the people who presented them had the credentials. Still, in our heart of hearts, the immersion idea always made sense."

"English-Through-English"

Other terms that demanded local clarification were those aspects of the law mandating that classroom instruction be conducted "overwhelmingly" in English, and that LEP students receive "nearly all" of their instruction in English (English Language Education for Immigrant Children Initiative, Article 1, p. 2). At a policy level, district leaders were forced to take a stand—or not. Some districts left the amount of English instruction up to the teachers, effectively leaving open the option of continued primary language instruction (Terry, 1998). In the Atwater Elementary School District, the board of trustees adopted as part of their immersion plan specific instances in which the primary language of students would or could be used (see chart 1).

Another district used a percentage approach: "Ninety percent of the instruction will be in English." In Ceres Unified School District, the amount of English was the toughest issue of all. Most of the district's seven bilingual teachers (all Spanish speaking) were concentrated at one school which had previously had bilingual classes. At the district's other 12 schools, including a comprehensive high school, bilingual staff were few. Moreover, the district's LEP population was mixed: Spanish speakers were the majority, but there were Hmong, Lao, and Arabic speakers as well. Most of the immersion teachers knew only English. Spanish-speaking teachers demanded the right to use Spanish as part

of their instruction. After protracted debate, the district decided to adopt a 100 percent English language use policy for instructional purposes (see chart 1).

Dr. Marilyn Hildebrandt, assistant superintendent of instruction, recalls the difficult process of arriving at that decision. "We kept preaching the more English the better," she says. "If we had not made a major statement about language use, it would have dissipated the intent of immersion quickly."

Chart 1 - Comparison of English Language Use Policies

SCHOOL DISTRICT	POLICY
Ceres Unified School District	The English language is to be used at all times during regular classroom instruction. Teachers and instructional paraprofessionals are not to use the child's primary language during any instructional activities. Students may use their home language during instruction, but should be encouraged to utilize English as much as possible. Emergency and health-related issues, playground interactions with peers and teachers, and communication with parents in a child's primary language is acceptable and encouraged.
Atwater Elementary School District	The predominant language of instruction in immersion classrooms is English. It should be the language of directions, instruction, discussion, and routine tasks. In those cases where a non-English language is utilized by the teacher or by an instructional assistant, it should meet one of the following criteria: 1. Emergency communications related to safety and welfare of students. 2. Clarification for a student, or group of students, of a word, concept, or idea. 3. Explanation of directions or instructions pertinent to a specific task. 4. Communications with a parent, or legal guardian, of a student.

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Breaking Old Habits

At one California high school, use of Spanish by teachers and instructional assistants in English immersion classrooms was so prevalent the district adopted a guideline restricting Spanish use to no more than 90 consecutive seconds. Though perhaps comical at first glance, classroom observations had revealed that teachers were routinely utilizing Spanish for extended time periods in classrooms where English teaching was the goal. At one point, it became necessary at a staff meeting to use a watch to illustrate how much could be accomplished in 90 seconds, alleviating teachers' concerns that they needed more time to teach English by using Spanish. At a later meeting to review the district's English immersion program, a Department of Education consultant laughingly referred to the "typo" in the plan limiting primary language use to 90 seconds. He sat dumbfounded as district officials explained the need to clearly set language use guidelines for teachers who for years had used Spanish extensively, even in ESL classes.

In short, all of these districts had to come to terms with "terms." Though difficult, narrowing the meaning of terms in the formative part of the program spared needless grief and misunderstandings later. "I think we all finally agree on what we mean when we speak with one another," says Hildebrandt.

Issue #2: So, what is immersion?

> *"We've always had immersion. We've mixed our LEP students with English-only students for years."*—Elementary Resource Teacher
>
> *"Can we still listen to bilingual radio even though we have an English immersion program?"*—School Administrator

For all intents and purposes, the Orange Unified School District injected the word "immersion" into California's language-minority education debate when it petitioned the California State Board of Education for permission in mid-1997 to eliminate its bilingual programs and replace them with something it called "Structured English Immersion." During the Proposition 227 debate, immersion for some became synonymous with simply eliminating primary language instruction and replacing it with English language instruction. This interpretation brought numerous testimonials from talk radio junkies of their relatives' success with "sink-or-swim," and how they had "made it" with no special help.

For other educators, immersion was associated with Canada and its success in teaching French to native English speakers, an approach more accurately described as "two-way immersion" or "dual immersion" (Genesee, 1984). As the debate intensified leading up to the June 2, 1998, vote on Proposition 227, opponents argued that "Sheltered English Immersion" (the term used in the law) was a "non-program," an "experiment" being pushed on California's LEP students, that it was "untested" and "untried" (Lelyveld, 1999). It would be more accurate to describe immersion education for many California

educators, Department of Education officials, and pundits as unacknowledged, disallowed, and long-resisted.

It Wasn't on the Test

If the concept is a simple one, the confusion over what "immersion" really is can be at least partially attributed to the mass teacher training efforts in California that, clearly, have striven to undermine the presentation of second language teaching principles based on immersion. California educators over the years have been forced to take course work designed to prepare them to teach LEP students (Clark, 1998). Some form of test usually followed these training programs, the curriculum for which was approved by the state-level Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

A review of this curriculum shows scant attention dedicated to informing California educators about immersion education, its history, where it is used, and its results. Instead, teachers are fed a steady diet of information that basically endorses native language instruction. Indeed, many non-bilingual educators emerged from these training programs probably more knowledgeable about bilingual programs (one in which they could not teach) than about English immersion, a program design at least more consistent with most districts' and schools' resources (English-speaking teachers and English-language materials).

Indeed, the principles of immersion education were almost dialectically opposed to what up until the passage of Proposition 227 had been considered absolute truth in some circles—the necessity for years of instruction through the primary language. Chart 2 presents a contrast between the principles of immersion and the "California primary language instruction model" to help illustrate the changes in thinking necessary for successful immersion program implementation.

Of course, charts are always easier to read than to implement. As each of these districts began discussing the immersion concept, it was typical for people to argue—sometimes very passionately—about the need for continued primary language instruction. One key question that seemed to focus attention was a simple one: Are our students becoming English proficient in our current program? The answer to this question was usually "no." "It came down to the progress—or lack of progress—that our LEP students were making in our previous bilingual classrooms," recalls James Brooks, superintendent of Riverdale Unified School District. "What we were doing was very inadequate." Dr. Sandra Lenker, superintendent of Atwater Elementary School District agrees. "Across the grades we had little accurate information about how our students were progressing in English," she says. "I still remember our realization that most of our LEP students were only receiving 30 minutes a day of ELD instruction. It was an 'aha' for all of us. How could you learn English in just 30 minutes a day?"

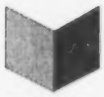

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Chart 2 - A Comparison of Program Principles	
English Immersion	Primary Language/Bilingual
Utilizes the English language for most instruction, and uses special strategies for teaching school subjects and second language simultaneously.	Students can learn best in their native language. Native language instruction ensures access to the core curriculum and grade promotion.
Features specialized groupings of English learners away from native speakers for one year only; common practice in bilingual programs is segregation for several years.	Segregation of students is bad. Sends a message of shame to non-English-speaking students that they have to be taught alone for some period of the day.
Maximizes the amount of understandable instruction in the new language.	English learning is dependent on the "transfer" of information learned through the primary language.
Seeks to accelerate English learning by increasing time spent learning English.	More primary language equals more English learning.
Instruction is geared to the students' developing English language level; English is actively "taught" using school subjects as the focus of the language lessons.	A good lesson will accelerate everyone's English, and they'll "acquire" all the language structures they need (past perfect subjunctive, reflexive pronoun use, etc.).
Success in learning a new language quickly creates confidence for future learning.	Primary language instruction is necessary to maintain and build students' self esteem.

Still, letting go of primary language instruction—though generally acknowledged to be an ineffective approach in these districts—became easier as teachers internalized the principles of immersion language teaching. Dr. Neil McKinnon, Orange Unified's assistant superintendent, recalls that once the immersion idea was explained and removed from the emotional arena, educators across the district quickly realized that this was a program the district could actually do. "Immersion turned out to be the most coherent program we have ever offered LEP students," says McKinnon. "Prior to that LEP students were seen as the bilingual teachers' responsibility and one that the majority of teachers didn't have to worry about. The immersion program changed that attitude completely."

Issue #3: Designing the Program

> "*Shouldn't we wait until they tell us how to do immersion?*"—Elementary School Principal

> "*It seems pretty clear to me that we use English to teach them English. That's the program*!"—Elementary School Teacher

Having defined terms and gained an understanding of immersion education, each of the districts moved aggressively into designing the actual program. Dr. Marilyn Hildebrandt, of Ceres Unified School District, recalls that it felt like "re-inventing" the whole school district. "We were designing a program that none of us had ever really seen in California," she says. "We soon realized that everything we did with immersion was going to touch some other aspect of the district, from transportation to report cards to teacher training." What follows is a detailed review of the immersion program designs adopted by these districts, showing how their programs responded to five basic immersion questions:

1. *Which students will be included in our immersion program?*

Proposition 227 called for districts to design a sheltered English immersion program that would develop in students a "good working knowledge" of English. To arrive at their definition of this term, the districts worked backward. If intermediate level students were candidates for modified, grade-appropriate content (known as Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English, or SDAIE), then "good working knowledge" could be called intermediate fluency. These students would possess grade-appropriate English skills in oral comprehension and speaking, with reading and writing skills approaching that level. Logically, then, students with less than intermediate skills (less than a good working knowledge) would be candidates for immersion.

It became immediately clear, however, that not all LEP students fall into such a neat sorting arrangement. Indeed, older students tended to demonstrate two very different profiles: Some spoke English with almost native speaker fluency, but their reading and writing skills in English were at the second- or third-grade level. Another group lacked both oral English *and* English literacy skills. Thus was born a bifurcated criteria for immersion program placement for older students (grades 7 through 12). Charts 3 and 4 show an immersion placement grid, including the "dual criteria" for older LEP students.

Chart 3 - English Immersion Program Placement Criteria, Elementary

Entry Criteria	Program	Goal	Exit Criteria
Pre-production	Sheltered Immersion	English Development	
Early Production	Sheltered Immersion	English Development	Intermediate Fluency Grade-Appropriate Literacy Skills
Speech Emergent	Sheltered Immersion	English Development	
Int. Fluent	SDAIE	Academic Achievement / Core Curriculum	
Adv. Fluent	SDAIE/Mainstream	Academic Achievement / Core Curriculum	Redesignation to FEP
Fluent English Proficient	Mainstream	Academic Achievement	Graduation / Proficiencies

Chart 4 - Dual Selection Criteria for Secondary LEP Students

Low Oral English, Low English Literacy	Sheltered English Immersion	English Development • Listening • Speaking • Reading • Writing	Int. Fluency Grade appropriate Literacy skills
Intermediate Oral English, Low English Literacy	Sheltered English Immersion	English Development • Content Area Reading • Content Area Writing	Grade appropriate Literacy skills

Note: At the secondary level, each of these immersion cohorts received a different program; those with low English oral (speaking skills) and low English literacy skills (reading and writing) received a program that addressed all those areas, while the students who lacked only English literacy skills took courses like "Content Area Reading Strategies" and "Writing in the Content Areas" to address their specific English literacy needs.

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Once the placement criteria had been defined, most of the districts realized that their current knowledge of their students' English proficiency was poor, incomplete, or outdated. Because most districts utilize the state-mandated English proficiency tests more for compliance purposes than program placement, several of the districts found themselves without up-to-date, useable placement data. It was common in all of the districts for many students —in some cases hundreds—to be re-tested to obtain a valid and current measure. One district scurried to train their 38 immersion program teachers in how to determine English fluency levels by administering the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM). "For really the first time perhaps in our district's history," recalls one site principal, "we actually have accurate assessment data on these students that we use for program placement and instruction."

2. *For how much of the school day will students be in an immersion classroom?*

The next issue faced by schools and districts in designing an immersion program was to decide what would characterize an immersion classroom and how much time per day students would spend there learning English. Both issues presented problems. First, the law clearly made a distinction between an "English language classroom" and an "English language mainstream classroom." The implication was startling to some: Create classrooms composed solely of English learners of less than intermediate fluency?

Again, the rationale was tangled with old ideas of language learning and their definitions. Some teachers in all districts quickly challenged the idea of segregating these students for their English instruction. "Put them in regular classes," they rallied, not understanding that they were calling for "submersion," a program in which English learners are mixed with native speakers and expected to master English and core content at a level designed for native speakers—with no special help.

Other teachers quickly supported the clustering idea, drawing perhaps unknowingly on several principles of immersion language education. First, putting the limited-English students together allows a teacher to design specific English language lessons suited to their needs. Second, by removing native English speakers, a teacher could more effectively provide comprehensible subject matter instruction using English. Lastly, time on task—learning English—could be intensified by the formation of these special classrooms. "It made such perfect sense," says one second-grade teacher. "I saw then that English could be taught very quickly because the students were all learning the same thing—English."

For each of the districts, the decision to form immersion classrooms comprised solely of English learners was controversial since it went against the notion that homogeneity in student groupings was to be avoided (unless, of course, it was a bilingual program). In Orange Unified, with 28 elementary schools featuring LEP student concentrations ranging from five at one elementary school to more than 850 at another, the issue was resolved by adopting three different grouping models, depending on the number of LEP students at a site. At those schools with high concentrations (more than 40 percent

LEP), LEP students stayed together for most of the day, since many of the classrooms already featured a majority of LEP students.

Mid-size schools adopted a clustering model, where for a certain part of the day LEP students were grouped by fluency stage for English instruction. Schools with LEP concentrations of less than 10 percent also clustered, which sometimes meant mixing several grades together for English language instruction. In Atwater, with seven elementary sites, it was relatively easy to cluster LEP students into immersion classes. The biggest challenge was at grades 4, 5 and 6, which each had fewer than seven immersion candidates. They were eventually pooled into one classroom. In Riverdale, the numbers were just about right for one class per grade, with the exception of the secondary grades, which were clustered into a seven-eight mix and a nine-12 mix.

3. How much of each day's instructional time will be in English?

If time-on-task is a central tenet of immersion theory, then more time spent learning English should result in more English learned. At an implementation level it boils down to this: how much time will students spend learning English—*and learning in English*—each day? California newspapers covered this issue extensively after Proposition 227 passed. Advocates of primary language instruction argued that 51 percent of the day was all the law required in the way of English instruction; the other 49 percent could be spent in the primary language (DeFao, 1998).

In one particularly bizarre twist, anti-immersion educators buzzed over a California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) bulletin outlining the pro-bilingual group's interpretation of "overwhelmingly in English" (CABE, 1998). In that bulletin it stated that since a judge's ruling on the legality of Proposition 227 had referred to the "overwhelming" 61 percent of votes in favor of the initiative, that meant that a student had only to spend 61 percent of the instructional day learning English, freeing up 39 percent of the day for primary language instruction. All the districts described here rejected these nonsensical interpretations and turned to writings on European immersion programs for guidance. District officials found that indeed most or all of the instruction during an immersion student's day was in the target language (Glenn, 1996). If the home language was utilized, it was used primarily for short-term explanations or was offered as an after-school option. Only Orange Unified included in its plan an allowance for up to 30 minutes per day of formalized home language assistance. This use of the home language was limited to students of pre-production or early production fluency stages. Moreover, this type of instruction—in most cases provided by an instructional assistant—followed a strict set of guidelines, including specific methods and activities.

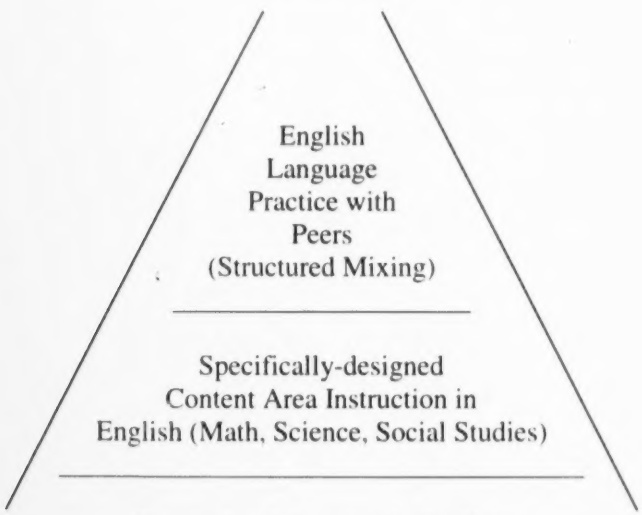
Structured Mixing

Finally, all of the profiled districts agreed that immersion students should spend some part of their day learning together with native-English speaking students during a time that came to be called "structured mixing." During this time, immersion students would be mixed together with fluent English proficient students to engage in tasks like hands-on science, art, music, or drama. The rationale was simple: Immersion students need to practice their developing English language skills with other English speakers.

Several residual benefits of mixing were quickly identified. First, the mixing time gave immersion teachers at least a short break during the day. "Language teaching is very rewarding, but it is also very tiring," said one teacher at a district immersion meeting. The mixing time also sent a strong message to all district teachers that LEP students were still everyone's responsibility—not just the immersion teachers'. Kevin Monsma of Delano looks at the structured mixing time as one of the most valuable components of the district's immersion program. "Once we worked out the logistics, structured mixing has become one of the most important times of the day for immersion students since they are using their English and working with other English-speaking students during that time," says Monsma.

Not surprisingly, all of the districts profiled here adopted program designs of a similar nature. Chart 5 shows a graphic rendering of the three basic components to all of the immersion programs, followed by a short description of each component.

Chart 5



III. Key Components

1. Focused and Systematic English Language Development (ELD): Each immersion student receives a comprehensive program of ELD daily, which is provided by a credentialed teacher. This instruction focuses on all aspects of the English language and utilizes the district's adopted ELD materials.

2. Modified, Comprehensible Core Instruction: All immersion students participate as fully as possible in the district's regular core program through the provision of modified instruction, known as Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE), provided by a credentialed teacher. Some of this content may be significantly modified to adapt it to the English capabilities of the learner.

3. Structured Mixing: All immersion students spend up to 75 minutes daily (this varies by district) learning together with non-LEP students. During this "mixing" time, students participate in varied activities, from science and art to music, and drama. The purpose of this time is for immersion students to use their developing English skills with native English-speaking peers.

4. Design of the Instructional Day: Recognizing that variance in the instructional program could threaten implementation efforts and results, all of the districts profiled in this article crafted a daily schedule for immersion classrooms. Though prescriptive, the daily schedules turned out to be helpful for teachers as they planned daily tasks for immersion students. Moreover, the specific time allotments allowed the districts to show clearly the increased importance that English language teaching would have in the immersion program. To further support teachers in their understanding of the daily schedule, Delano Union Elementary School District produced an instructional video that led teachers through the minutes of the day. The video not only explained the immersion program, but featured actual lessons from district teachers and showed how these lessons related to the program's goals, principles, and intended outcomes. Chart 6 provides examples of daily schedules for both elementary and secondary immersion classrooms.

5. The Role of Content and Selection of Materials: Even for the most skilled teachers, the mandate to "teach English" was sometimes perplexing. Teachers would ask: Does this mean teaching all day the skills of English, i.e., nouns, verbs, direct objects, and reflexive pronouns? Do I still teach social studies, math, and science? Do immersion students still have to read the grade-level literature books? How do I teach reading? These and countless other questions were asked in all the districts before and well into program implementation. Complicating the issue was a steady barrage of press coverage quoting immersion foes and bilingual advocates who said that immersion students would fall woefully behind, be bored to tears by hour after hour of English sentence diagramming, and that their self-esteem would be crushed by instruction in a foreign language. In a particularly bizarre twist, the Los Angeles Unified School District directed its immersion teachers to withhold English reading lessons (Colvin, 1998), apparently seeking to "alleviate" some of these outcomes.

Chart 6

Elementary or Self-contained

						Structured Mixing
Calendar Weather Morning message Conversation	Intergrated Themed Literacy Instruction				Systematic ELD	**Science, Art P.E., Music**
	Math	Science	L/A	Social Science		
30 minutes	120 minutes				50 minutes	

Secondary - Low Oral English, Low English Literacy

							Structured Mixing	
Conversational English	Cross-circular Investigation				Structure of English	Music and English	**P.E.**	**Elective**
* Current events * School news	Math	Science	L/A	Social Science	Study Skills			
30 minutes	120 minutes				50 minutes	50 minutes	50 minutes	50 minutes

Secondary - Intermediate Oral English, Low English Literacy

High Intensity Literacy Development

Content area Reading strategies	**Content area Writing**	**Study Skills**	Science (SDAIE)	Math (SDAIE or Mainstream)	P.E.	Elective
50 minutes	50 minutes	50 minutes	50 minutes	50 minutes	50 minutes	50 minutes

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The five districts studied here adopted a much more reasoned approach. "We told our teachers that the primary goal of the immersion program was to teach English skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing," says Dr. Hildebrandt of Ceres Unified. "But we also told them that in many cases content areas would be the vehicle, i.e., the 'subject,' of these lessons." In Orange Unified, the district offered an ongoing series of practical, hands-on workshops that showed teachers how to use content-area subjects for language development. A lesson on the life cycle, for example, was a good time to teach words related to trees, seeds, and spring. "The Little Red Hen" provided a nice forum for expanding students' range of adjectives for describing people. Bobbi Ochoa, Orange Unified's immersion program resource teacher, remembers that teachers had to learn to look at subject matter as both academic content and as English learning. "It wasn't hard for them to do this," she explains. "It was just a new way of looking at things."

IV. Moving to Implementation

As each of the districts neared the date to implement, it became apparent that many of the same issues that had confronted the planning teams (semantics, lack of understanding of immersion, etc.) would probably present themselves again in new forums. Though each district's community was vastly different, there was much commonality in their approaches to these issues, each of which is explained below.

Parent Education

Notwithstanding evidence that a majority of immigrant parents support the teaching of English in public schools (Center for Equal Opportunity, 1996), the scene was sometimes less clear at a local level. Orange Unified, for example, had received ample press coverage because of parent opposition to its efforts to implement an immersion program in fall 1997. At the other extreme, Hispanic parents in the small rural town of Riverdale eagerly signed their names in the months prior to the vote on Proposition 227 to a district request to eliminate bilingual education and begin an immersion English program in grades K-12.

Adding to local moods was a much-discussed and little-understood provision of Proposition 227 that allowed parents to request an "alternative" program to the mandated English immersion design. Perhaps not surprisingly, reaction across the districts to the announcement that English immersion would be the predominant program was mixed. The central challenge where there was dissent seemed to educate parents—as the districts had done with staff—about what immersion was. Many parents, explains Dr. McKinnon of Orange, thought that immersion would leave their children with no special services. "We learned that it was very important to define the program in terms parents could understand," says McKinnon. "We had to communicate and let parents know that we were going to take care of their kids."

In Delano, Kevin Monsma braced for a round of parent meetings at each of the district's seven elementary schools, not knowing what to expect in an area that had featured bilingual programs for years. Despite some limited resistance, Monsma learned that the best spokespeople for the new program were district parents themselves. "The emotional aspects of the law initially clouded the need for information," he says. "We found that parents who believed in the idea were very persuasive to parents who were unsure or against it. We also encouraged them to

come and visit the classrooms. It was a very open process, which in the end made things much easier." In Atwater, the reaction was similar. "We found that some parents who initially were opposed to immersion came to support it once they understood it better," says Superintendent Lenker. "We kept seeing very clearly that this was more than a program; to them it was their children." Waiver requests to get out of the immersion program totaled fewer than 50 between all five districts.

Public Relations and Community Perception

Soon after implementation in Delano, Kevin Monsma went on the public relations offensive. "We were proud of this program and were very open to discussion or comment," he says. Two weeks after school started, Monsma invited several media reporters to tour the schools and talk with teachers. The subsequent media profiles of the program were upbeat and positive, stressing how the district had used Proposition 227 as a mechanism for improving education for Limited-English Proficient students (Shrider, 1998; Schettler, 1998). In Atwater, the decision to call the new immersion program Accelerated Classes for English was part of a district effort to remove negative post-227 connotations from immersion and instead associate it with success, intensity, and purpose. Riverdale's High Intensity English Immersion Academy quickly established itself as a fast-track English learning program, where students were rewarded regularly at festive community gatherings with bronze, silver, or gold eagle lapel pins to demonstrate their increasing mastery of English.

In Orange, where the program had taken some hits in the media, positive anecdotal observations from teachers, parents, and administrators about students' success in learning English were bolstered by a mid-term progress report showing that 81 percent of immersion students had advanced to speech-emergent or intermediate English fluency. A front-page piece in the *Los Angeles Times* described the district program and offered a balanced profile of its successes and challenges (Anderson, 1998). Publication and distribution of tri-fold brochures written in a colloquial question-and-answer format also proved helpful to parents and community members trying to get a handle on the new program.

Leadership and Decisiveness

Unlike Orange and Riverdale, the other three districts had not thought through immersion education in any significant way prior to the public vote. Once Proposition 227 passed on June 2, 1998, districts had only 60 days to prepare for its implementation. "We all had a real lack of foresight as to the impact of what this law was going to do," recalls Lenker of Atwater. "Most of us probably thought it wouldn't pass because bilingual programs were so institutionalized in California," Dr. Hildebrandt of Ceres agrees. "We were in such a state of denial all summer," she says. "We all thought it was going to be overturned. Boy, were we wrong."

Once passed, though, the time line was short. Whereas Orange Unified and Riverdale Unified had crafted immersion plans and begun a dialogue in their districts nearly a year earlier, Ceres, Atwater, and Delano were caught flat-footed. To move quickly, each of the districts established a small working group that included direct participation of superintendents, assistant

starting gun. "This is not the kind of issue that you form 100 committees to decide," she says. superintendents, key school principals, and the local school boards. In retrospect, Lenker credits her four-person planning group with the district's success in having a program in place at the starting gun. "This is not the kind of issue that you form 100 committees to decide," she says. "It's too emotional. We made a decision at an executive level, kept the board informed, and did it quickly."

In Ceres, the team met late into the evening and on a weekend; after five days, the plan was in draft form and ready for comment. The following week, it was presented to a group of teachers who had been selected to teach in the district's newly christened Accelerated Language Academy. Questions were asked, some tears were shed, and a few minor changes were made. Classes began the following week. Delano followed a similar time line and process: "We made a transition from bilingual education to immersion education in six weeks," says Monsma. "We took a few hits along the way, but the program is in place now and doing well."

Measuring Student Progress

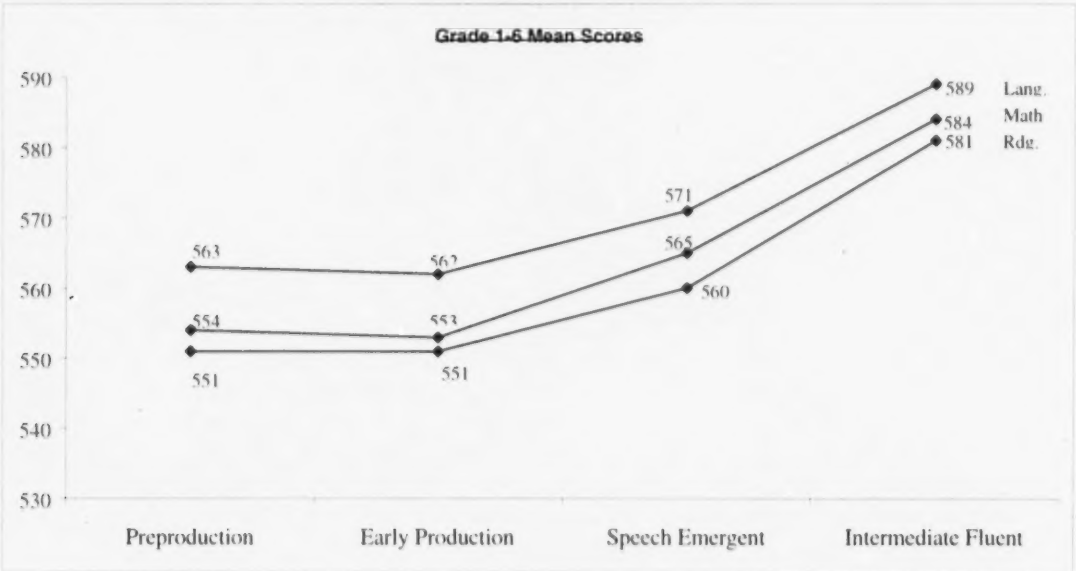
As in many parts of the country, California public education is facing increased demands for accountability. There is some documentation showing that schools and districts have struggled in their efforts to collect clean, complete data on their LEP students' English learning progress. Though teachers can easily recount stories of rapid English learning and academic success (Sahagun, 1999), the quantitative back-up data are sometimes sorely missing. For that reason, each of the districts profiled here recognized the need for a rigorous, ongoing evaluation process for their structured English immersion programs. In a rare act of educational congruity, all of the districts independently decided on an evaluation design that the Orange Unified School District had utilized. By using the same design, the districts would be able to compare their data not only in house, but with the other districts.

The Orange Unified School District's evaluation featured two interesting approaches to measure the success of their immersion program. First, they adopted a statistical technique known as "survival analysis" to more accurately show LEP students' progress through the English oral fluency stages (preproduction, early production, speech emergent, intermediate fluency and advanced fluency). By examining the proportion of those who succeed in moving during a given time period, survival analysis calculates the rate at which children, among all of those who have an opportunity, move from one language learning stage to another. In this way, the districts can determine how long it takes students to move through the stages and can at any given time show how many students had exited a given fluency stage. This breakdown of the term "LEP" encourages teachers to be more aware of student movement through the fluency stages and how these stages can and should be used for instructional planning and grouping within a classroom.

Orange Unified's student data for English speaking and oral comprehension after the first year of immersion education is presented in Table 1 below. This information comes from district teachers who use a special English protocol to measure and record students' oral English development at three times during the year. Tables 2 and 3 show preliminary data for Atwater

and Delano at the mid-point of their first year of immersion education using the same assessment instrument. Below each table is the survival analysis.

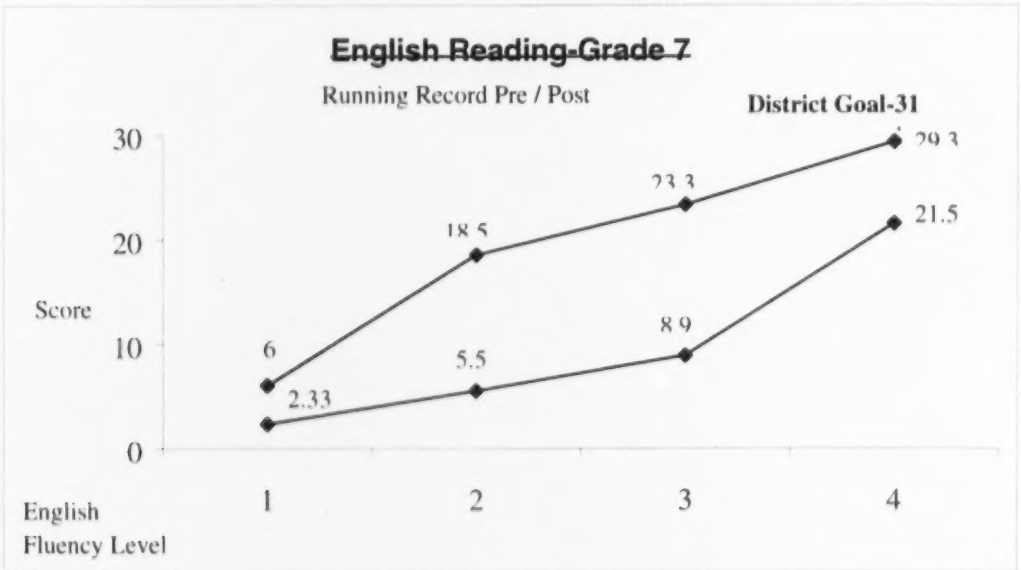
Table 1.
Orange Unified School District



Survival Analysis

	Pre-production	Early Production	Speech Emergent	Int. Fluent
Number Moved	413	681	572	6
% who moved from eligible	74%	57%	32%	1%

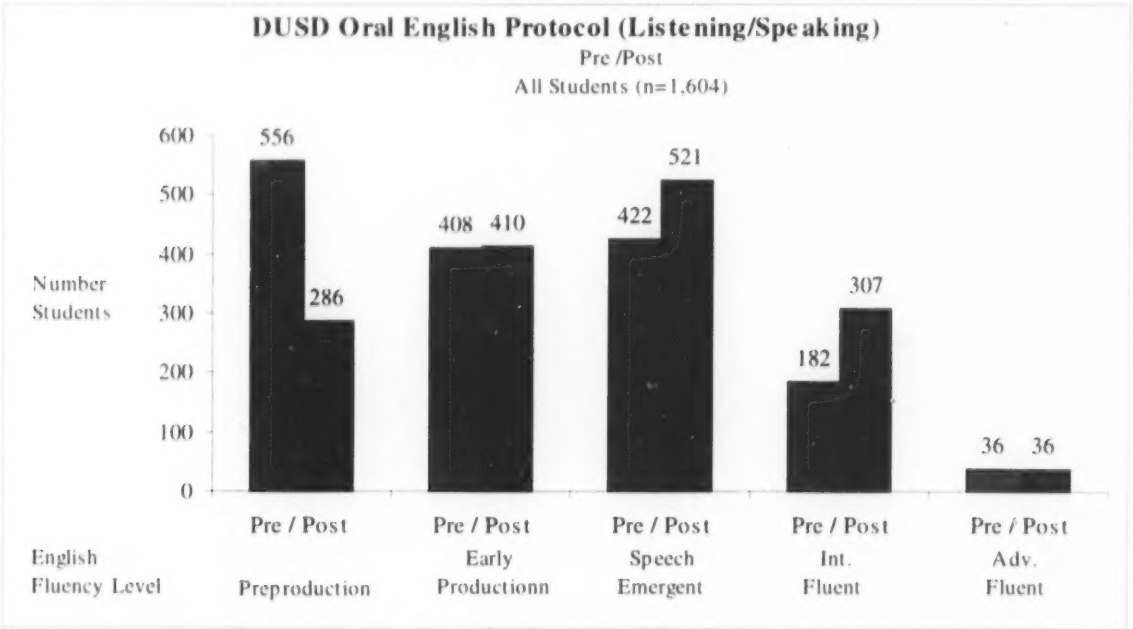
Table 2.
Atwater Elementary School District



Survival Analysis

	Pre-production	Early Production	Speech Emergent	Int. Fluent	Adv. Fluent
Number Moved	152	172	85	16	4
% who moved from eligible	71%	82%	36%	14%	31%

Table 3.
Delano Unified School District



Survival Analysis

	Preproduction	Early Production	Speech Emergent	Int. Fluent	Adv. Fluent
Number Moved	270	268	169	44	44
% who moved from eligible	49%	66%	40%	24%	100%

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Reading and Writing Assessment

With respect to achievement in English reading and writing, the districts employ a "proficiency-matched" analysis that allows them to see the relationship between English oral fluency and literacy development, mathematics, or any other area (two of the districts also collect running records for reading achievement and rubric-scored writing assessments, each of which are matched to the oral fluency stage). This analysis is intended to explore a central tenet of immersion: that by accelerating English ability, students will more quickly be able to access the full range of the district's core curriculum. The charts that follow show how proficiency-matched student achievement analysis is used for reporting standardized test data, and other reading and writing test data.

Chart 7
Orange Unified School District

Relationship Between Oral English Fluency Stages and Reading, Language and Mathematics Achievement
SAT9 Standardized Test, Spring 1998
Mean Scaled Scores (n=3,120)

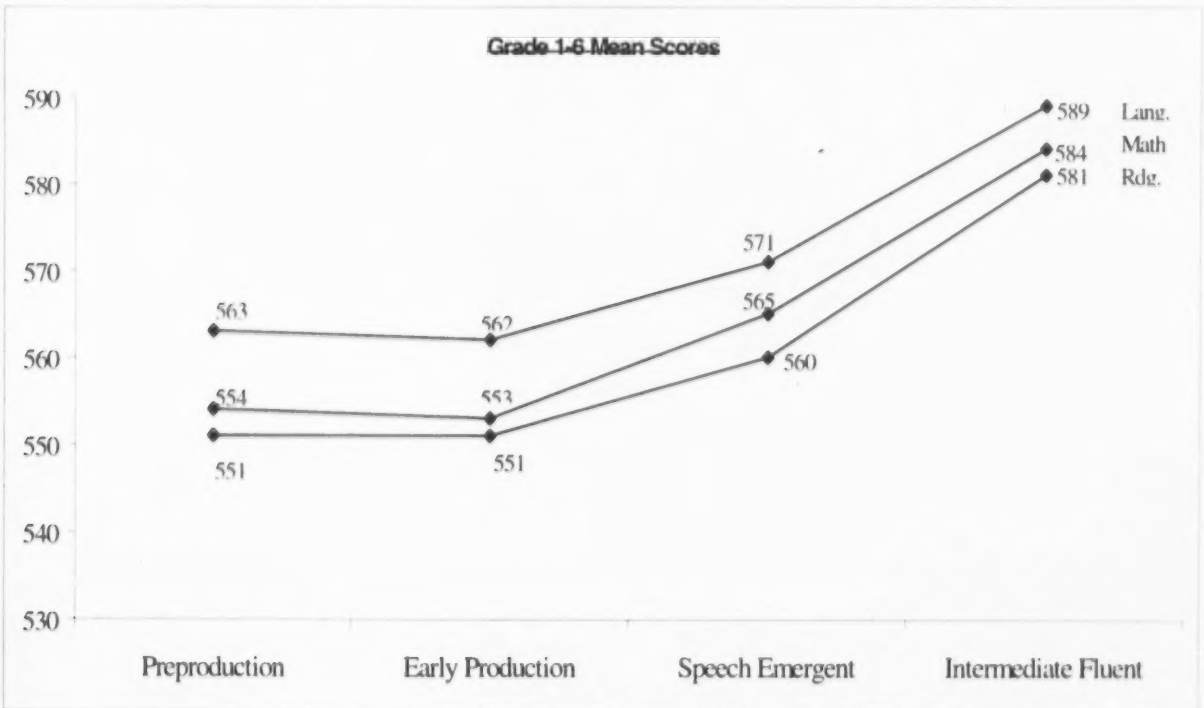
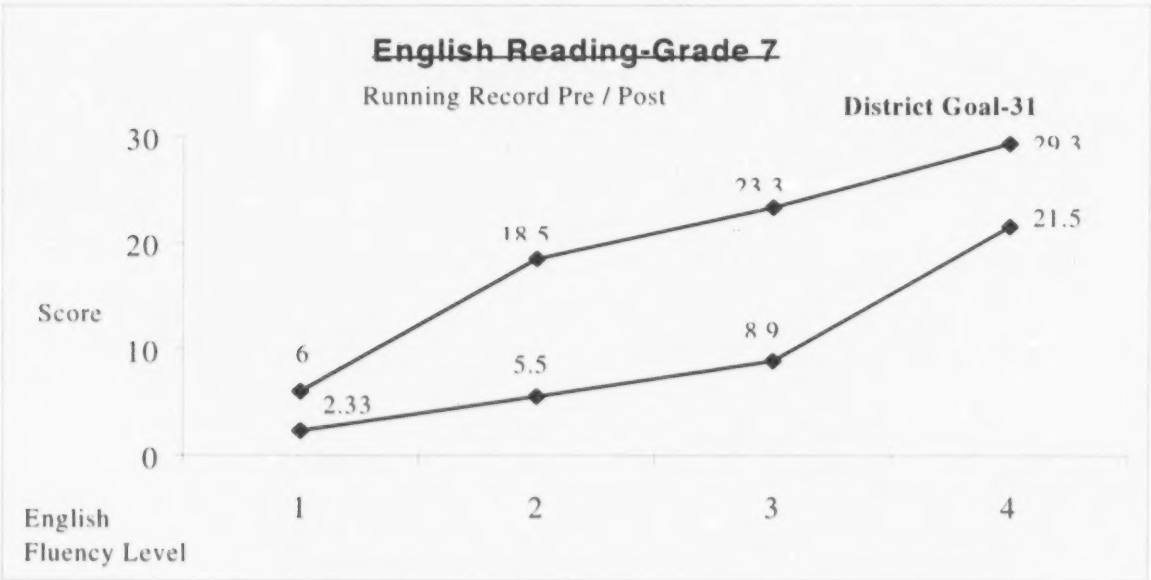


Chart 8
Atwater Elementary School District

Relationship Between Oral English Fluency Stage and Reading Achievement
After 90 Days of Instruction
(Note: A score of 31 is considered on grade level)



By using this evaluation design all of the districts established a systematic way of exploring in detail the full range of English development of their immersion students. Teachers, for their part, use the information to see which aspects of their instruction are yielding the most results. For example, in the Ceres Unified School District teachers' review and analysis of the program–wide data revealed that in the early part of the program there had been an emphasis placed on oral language development and a corresponding under-emphasis on writing development.

This showed up in rapid oral language growth scores, but a generally lower growth rate in writing development. The data helped teachers to adjust the amount of time they spend each day teaching writing and also was the catalyst for important discussions about the actual writing tasks that immersion students were being asked to do. In short, by moving away from "LEP" data to a more complete language profile of immersion students, all of the districts were able to more successfully unify data collection and analysis with instructional improvement.

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Conclusion

The passage of Proposition 227 in California sent a major shock wave through a state that had followed 22 years of bilingual ideology in spite of mixed results and varied factors that made it impossible for many districts to competently implement. The five districts profiled here had either already begun immersion education or quickly moved to do so after the passage of Proposition 227 in June 1998. Though very different in terms of size, location, and demographics, all of the districts encountered many of the same issues and challenges as they geared up for implementing English immersion and its subsequent day-to-day operation. This article suggests that as districts move away from primary language instruction, they are likely to find that undefined educational terminology, long-standing bilingual ideology, and poor understanding of what immersion is can make the initial going rough. Once implemented, districts and schools must make their program clear to parents and the community. Finally, well-designed evaluation plans and careful, consistent monitoring are imperative to be able to show that the programs are accomplishing their goals.

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